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Child Verse: Poems Grave and Gay

CHILD VERSE

Poems Grave & Gay

by John B. Tabb

7/25/23

Small, Maynard & Company.
Boston 1900

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Entered at Stationers' Hall

yf8701

First Edition (1250 copies) November, 1899
Second Edition (1000 copies) December, 1899

Stanford
Jan 3 1900
C
J

The Rockwell and Churchill Press
Boston, U.S.A.

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TO

MY LITTLE FRIEND

Henry Dinneen

WITH MY

LOVE AND BLESSING

NOTE

SOME of these verses have appeared in other places: one in St. Nicholas, *one in* Harper's Young People; *and the* Sunday School Times, *the* Youth's Companion, *and the* Independent *have each published others. To this class belong, I think, all I reprint from my* Poems *and* Lyrics. *Most of the contents, however, is new.*

J. B. T.

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CHILD VERSE

HARE-BELLS

RING! The little Rabbits' eyes,
In the morning clear,
Moisten to the melodies
They alone can hear.

Ring! The little Rabbits' feet,
Shod with racing rhyme,
If the breezes they would beat,
Must be beating time.

Ring! When summer days are o'er,
And the snowfalls come,
Rabbits count the hours no more,
For the bells are dumb.

AT COCK-CROW

CROW! For the night has thrice denied
The glory of the Sun,
And now, repentant, turns aside
To weep what he has done.

THE BLUEBIRD

WHEN God had made a host of them,
One little flower still lacked a stem
To hold its blossom blue;
So into it He breathed a song,
And suddenly, with petals strong
As wings, away it flew.

THE WOODPECKER

THE wizard of the woods is he;
For in his daily round,
Where'er he finds a rotting tree,
He makes the timber sound.

CHIMNEY STACKS

IN winter's cold and summer's heat
The hospitable chimneys greet
Their never-failing guests;
For when the sparks are upward gone,
The swallows downward come anon,
To build their neighboring nests.

BUTTERFLY

BUTTERFLY, Butterfly, sipping the sand,
Have you forgotten the flowers of the land?
Or are you so sated with honey and dew
That sand-filtered water tastes better to you?

THE HONEY-BEE

O BEE, good-by!
Your weapon's gone,
And you anon
Are doomed to die;
But Death to you can bring
No second sting.

THE BEE AND THE BLOSSOMS

"WHY stand ye idle, blossoms bright,
The livelong summer day?"
"Alas! we labour all the night
For what thou takest away."

THE TAX-GATHERER

"AND pray, who are you?"
Said the violet blue
To the Bee, with surprise
At his wonderful size,
In her eye-glass of dew.

"I, madam," quoth he,
"Am a publican Bee,
Collecting the tax
On honey and wax.
Have you nothing for me?"

JACK–O'–LANTERN

"JACK–O'–LANTERN, Jack-o'-Lantern,
Tell me where you hide by day?"
"In the cradle where the vapours
Dream the sunlit hours away."

"Jack-o'-Lantern, Jack-o'-Lantern,
Who rekindles you at night?"
"Any firefly in the meadow
Lends a Jack-o'-Lantern light."

THE PLEIADS

"WHO are ye with clustered light,
Little Sisters seven?"
"Crickets, chirping all the night
On the hearth of heaven."

JACK FROST'S APOLOGY

TO strip you of your foliage
My spirit sorely grieves;
Nor will I in the work engage
Unless you grant your leaves.

A CAVALCADE

"THISTLE-DOWN, Thistle-down, whither away?
Will you not longer abide?"
"Nay, we have wedded the winds to-day,
And home with the rovers we ride."

SILK

'TWAS the shroud of many a worm-like thing
That rose from its tangled skein;
'Twas the garb of many a god-like king
Who went to the worms again.

SEED–TIME

WHEN Trumpet-flowers begin to blow
The Thistle-downs take heed,
For then they know 'tis time to go
And plant the wingèd seed.

A LEGACY

DO you remember, little cloud,
This morning when you lay —
A mist along the river — what
The waters had to say?

And how the many-coloured flowers
That on the margin grew,
All promised when the day was done
To leave their tints to you?

STANFORD

AMID THE ROSES

THERE was laughter 'mid the Roses,
For it was their natal day;
And the children in the garden were
As light of heart as they.

There were sighs amid the Roses,
For the night was coming on;
And the children — weary now of play —
Were ready to be gone.

There are tears amid the Roses,
For the children are asleep;
And the silence of the garden makes
The lonely blossoms weep.

LIGHT AND SHADOW

"I LOVE you, little maid,"
Said the Sunbeam to the Shade,
As all day long she shrank away before him;
But at twilight, ere he died,
She was weeping at his side;
And he felt her tresses softly trailing o'er him.

SLEEP

WHEN he is a little chap,
We call him *Nap*.
When he somewhat older grows,
We call him *Doze*.
When his age by hours we number,
We call him *Slumber*.

THE FIRE-FLY

"ARE you flying through the night
Looking where to find me?"
"Nay; I travel with a light
For the folks *behind* me."

THE DRAGON-FLY

"IS skimming o'er a stagnant pool
Your only occupation?"
"Ah, no: 'tis at this Summer School
I get my education."

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ARCHERY

A BOW across the sky
Another in the river,
Whence swallows upward fly,
Like arrows from a quiver.

A SPY

SIGHED the languid Moon to the Morning Star:
"O little maid, how late you are!"
"I couldn't rise from my couch," quoth she,
"While the Man-in-the-Moon was looking at me."

A LAMENT

"O LADY CLOUD, why are you weeping?" I said.
"Because," she made answer, "my rain-beau is dead."

FERN SONG

DANCE to the beat of the rain, little Fern,
And spread out your palms again,
And say, "Tho' the sun
Hath my vesture spun,
He had laboured, alas, in vain,
But for the shade
That the Cloud hath made,
And the gift of the Dew and the Rain."
Then laugh and upturn
All your fronds, little Fern,
And rejoice in the beat of the rain!

THE BROOK

IT is the mountain to the sea
That makes a messenger of me;
And, lest I loiter on the way
And lose what I am sent to say,
He sets his reverie to song,
And bids me sing it all day long.
Farewell! for here the stream is slow,
And I have many a mile to go.

AN INTERVIEW

I SAT with chill December
Beside the evening fire.
"And what do you remember,"
I ventured to inquire,
"Of seasons long forsaken?"
He answered in amaze,
"My age you have mistaken;
I've lived but thirty *days*."

BABY'S DIMPLES

LOVE goes playing hide-and-seek
'Mid the roses on her cheek,
With a little imp of Laughter,
Who, the while he follows after,
Leaves the footprints that we trace
All about the Kissing-place.

A BUNCH OF ROSES

THE rosy mouth and rosy toe
Of little baby brother
Until about a month ago
Had never met each other;
But nowadays the neighbours sweet,
In every sort of weather,
Half way with rosy fingers meet,
To kiss and play together.

FOOT–SOLDIERS

'TIS all the way to Toe-town,
Beyond the Knee-high hill,
That Baby has to travel down
To see the soldiers drill.

One, two, three, four, five, a-row —
A captain and his men —
And on the other side, you know,
Are six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

THE BABY'S STAR

THE Star that watched you in your sleep
Has just put out his light.
"Good-day, to you on earth," he said,
"Is here in heaven Good-night.

"But tell the Baby when he wakes
To watch for my return;
For I'll hang out my lamp again
When his begins to burn."

SLUMBER-SONG

LO, in the west
A cloud at rest —
A babe upon its mother's breast —
Is sleeping now.

Above it beams
A star that seems
To shed the light of holy dreams
Upon its brow.

But cloud and star,
Tho' nearer far
They seem, my Babe, more distant are
From heaven than thou.

AN IDOLATER

THE Baby has no skies
But Mother's eyes,
Nor any God above
But Mother's Love.
His angel sees the Father's face,
But *he* the Mother's, full of grace;
And yet the heavenly kingdom is
Of such as this.

THE NEW-YEAR BABE

TWO together, Babe and Year,
At the midnight chime,
Through the darkness drifted here
To the coast of Time.

Two together, Babe and Year,
Over night and day,
Crossed the desert, Winter drear
To the land of May.

On together, Babe and Year
Swift to Summer passed.
"Rest a moment, Brother dear,"
Said the Babe at last.

"Nay, but onward," answered Year,
"We must farther go,
Through the Vale of Autumn sere
To the Mount of Snow."

Toiling upward, Babe and Year
Climbed the frozen height.
"We may rest together here,
Brother Babe, — Good-night!"

Then together Babe and Year
Slept; but ere the dawn,
Vanishing, I know not where,
Brother Year was *gone!*

BICYCLES! TRICYCLES!

BICYCLES! Tricycles! Nay, to shun laughter,
Try cycles first, and *buy* cycles after;
For surely the buyer deserves but the worst
Who would buy cycles, failing to try cycles first.

HIGH AND LOW

A BOOT and a Shoe and a Slipper
Lived once in the Cobbler's row:
But the Boot and the Shoe
Would have nothing to do
With the Slipper, because she was low.

But the king and the queen and their daughter
On the Cobbler chanced to call;
And as neither the Boot
Nor the Shoe would suit
The Slipper went off to the ball.

DOCTOR TUMBLE-BUG

WITH wondrous skill
He works until,
To suit himself, he makes it
A patent Pill,
To cure or kill
The sufferer that takes it.

CLOSE QUARTERS

LITTLE toe, big toe, three toes between,
All in a pointed shoe!
Never was narrower forecastle seen
Nor so little room for the crew.

THE TIME-BROOD

I WONDER how the mother-Hour
Can feed each hungry Minute,
And see that every one of them
Gets sixty seconds in it;

And whether, when she goes abroad,
She knows which ones attend her;
For all of them are just alike
In age and size and gender.

PAINS-TAKING

"TAKE pains," growled the Tooth to the
Dentist;
"The same," said the Dentist, "to you."
Then he added, "No doubt,
Before you are out
You'll have taken most pains of the two."

A RUB

'TWIXT Handkerchief and Nose
A difference arose;
And a tradition goes
That they settled it by blows.

CATS

THEY fought like demons of the night
Beneath a shrunken moon,
And all the roof at dawn of light
With *fiddle-strings* was strewn.

AN INSECTARIAN

"I CANNOT wash my dog," she said,
"Nor touch him with a comb,
For fear the Fleas upon him bred
May find no other home."

THE SQUIRREL

WHO combs you, little Squirrel?
And do you twist and twirl
When some one puts the papers on
To keep your tail in curl?

And must you see the dentist
For every tooth you break?
And are you apt from eating nuts
To get the stomach-ache?

HOSPITALITY

SAID a Snake to a Frog with a wrinkled skin,
"As I notice, dear, that your dress is thin,
And a *rain* is coming, I'll take you in."

FROG–MAKING

SAID Frog papa to Frog mamma,
"Where is our little daughter?"
Said Frog mamma to Frog papa,
"She's underneath the water."

Then down the anxious father went,
And there, indeed, he found her,
A-tickling tadpoles, till they kicked
Their tails off all around her.

THE TREE-FROG PEDIGREE

OUR great ancestor, Polly Wog,
With her cousin, Thaddeus Pole,
Eloped from her home in an Irish bog,
And crossing the sea on the "Mayflower's" log,
At the risk of body and soul,
Married a Frog; and thus, you see,
How we come by a place in the family-tree
And the family name, Tree-frog.

AN EXPLANATION

TO the young lady Toad said her mother,
"How had you the boldness, my dear,
To propose to Miss Polliwog's brother?"
"Why, mamma," she replied, "'tis leap year!"

THE PARLOUR AND THE FLY

"WILL you walk into the Spider?"
Said the Parlour to the Fly;
"He's the emptiest little spider
That ever you did spy.

"And he covers me with cobweb;
So I want you to go in;
For — his lower chamber furnished —
He will have no room to spin."

NO GO

SAID a simpering Butterfly, sipping a rose,
To a graceless Mosquito on grandpapa's nose,
Whom she hoped to entrap,
"Pray come, Sir, and taste of this delicate stuff."
"Thanks, Madam, I'm just now taking my snuff,"
Quoth the impudent chap.

A MOUSE, A CAT, AND AN IRISH BULL

A LITTLE mouse nibbled a Limburger cheese,
And back to his bedchamber stole,
Whence never again was he destined to squeeze,
For the smell was too large for the hole.

And a Pussy Cat, passing, instinctively stood;
For her appetite urged her to try it;
But she answered her stomach that grumbled for food,
"I should die if I lived on such diet."

THE SAME WITH A DIFFERENCE

WHEN first they wed he was a sing-er,
And much delight his songs did bring her;
But nowadays he proves a sin-ger,
And makes it hot for her as ginger.

AN INCONVENIENCE

TO his cousin the Bat
Squeaked the envious Rat,
"How fine to be able to fly!"
Tittered she, "Leather wings
Are convenient things;
But nothing *to sit on* have I."

THE TRYST

POTATO was deep in the dark under ground,
Tomato, above in the light.
The little Tomato was ruddy and round,
The little Potato was white.

And redder and redder she rounded above,
And paler and paler he grew,
And neither suspected a mutual love
Till they met in a Brunswick stew.

ETIQUETTE

"I LONG," said the new-gathered Lettuce,
"To meet our illustrious guest."
Cried the Caster, "Such haste
Is in very bad taste:
See first that you're properly *dressed*."

A SUNSTROKE

THE Sun courted Water,
Earth's loveliest daughter,
And strove to abduct her in vain:
For, when he had caught her,
And to the clouds brought her,
Home she came running in rain.

A SHUFFLE

THERE was a rumpus in the Pack,
Whereof the King and Queen and Jack
Were playing knavish parts.
On Club and Spade was put the blame;
But these asserted 'twas a game
Of Diamonds and Hearts.

WASHINGTON'S RUSE

WHEN Georgie would not go to bed,
If some one asked him why,
"What is the use?" he gravely said,
"You know I cannot lie."

PANIC

IT struck the signs of the Zodiac,
Around the immovable Man
Who stands in front of the Almanack
To show his interior plan.

The Scorpion attacked the Bull,
The Bull aroused the Lion;
The Crab by their tails
Flung the Fish in the Scales,
Where they floundered as on a gridiron;
The Billy Goat went for the Gemini twins;
The Ram made a rush at Aquarius;
And a n*arrow* escape had the Virgo's shins
From the shaft of her beau Sagittarius.

THE END OF IT

A WHOLE–TAIL dog, and a half-tail dog,
And a dog without a tail,
Went all three out on an autumn day
To follow a red-fox trail.

But the dogs that carried their tails along
Fell out, it is said, by the way;
And the loss of a tail and a half at the end
Of the dogs put an end to the fray.

When each, as a morsel sweet, gulped down
What had late been a neighbor's pride,
"You've kept your tails," laughed the no-tail dog,
"But you wear them now *inside*."

A LITTLE CHILD'S PRAYERS

I

MAKE me, dear Lord, polite and kind
To every one, I pray;
And may I ask you how you find
Yourself, dear Lord, to-day?

II

Lord, I have lost a toy
With which I love to play;
And as you were yourself a boy
Of just my age to-day,
O Son of Mary, would you mind
To help me now my toy to find?

THE CHILD

AT BETHLEHEM

I

LONG, long before the Babe could speak,
When he would kiss his mother's cheek
And to her bosom press,
The brightest angels, standing near,
Would turn away to hide a tear,
For they are motherless.

II

Where were ye, Birds, that bless His name,
When wingless to the world He came,
And *wordless*, — tho' Himself the Word
That made the blossom and the bird?

III

TO HIS MOTHER

He brought a Lily white,
That bowed its fragrant head
And blushed a rosy red
Before her fairer light.

He brought a Rose; and lo,
The crimson blossom saw
Her beauty; and in awe
Became as white as snow.

A LILY OF THE FIELD

IN all his glory, Solomon
Was never so arrayed;
Yet far more beautiful is one —
A MOTHER and a MAID —
Whose loveliness and lowliness
God stooped from highest heaven to bless.

THE LAMB–CHILD

WHEN Christ the Babe was born,
Full many a little lamb,
Upon the wintry hills forlorn,
Was nestled near its dam ;

And, waking or asleep,
Upon His mother's breast,
For love of her, each mother-sheep
And baby-lamb He blessed.

A PAIR OF TURTLE-DOVES

THE PURIFICATION

"WHERE, woman, is thine offering —
The debt of law and love?"
"My Babe a tender nestling is,
And I the mother-dove."

HIDE-AND-SEEK

YOU hid your little self, dear Lord,
As other children do;
But oh, how great was their reward
Who sought three days for you!

OUT OF BOUNDS

A LITTLE Boy, of heavenly birth,
But far from home to-day,
Comes down to find His ball, the Earth,
That Sin has cast away.
O comrades, let us one and all
Join in to get Him back His ball.

THE CHILD ON CALVARY

THE Cross is tall,
And I too small
To reach His hand
Or touch His feet;
But on the sand
His footprints I have found,
And it is sweet
To kiss the holy ground.

THE CHILD

AT NAZARETH

I

ONCE, measuring His height, He stood
Beneath a cypress-tree,
And, leaning back against the wood,
Stretched wide His arms for me;
Whereat a brooding mother-dove
Fled fluttering from her nest above.

II

At evening He loved to walk
Among the shadowy hills, and talk
Of Bethlehem;
But if perchance there passed us by

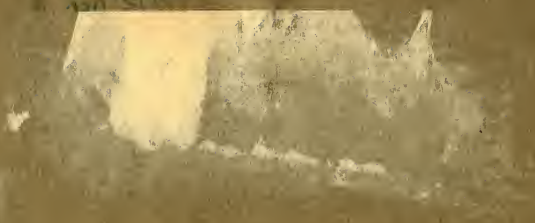
The paschal lambs, He'd look at them
In silence, long and tenderly;
And when again He'd try to speak,
I've seen the tears upon His cheek.

ST. THERESA AND THE CHILD

"WHO art thou, son?" The little stranger smiled,
"And who art *thou?*" Whereto she made reply,
"Theresa I of Jesus am, my child."
He — radiant — "Jesus of Theresa I."

TRADITION

WHEN home our blessed Lord was gone,
His mother lived alone with John;
For each had secrets to impart
That Love had taught them both *by heart.*



OCT 8 1925